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bath or wash is necessary to remove the impurity caused by the act. Non-observance of these rules will have a polluting effect; and according to the nature and degree of pollution purificatory rites will have to be undertaken.

Belief in ghosts and spirits is universal. They are feared and propitiated. Strange mystical power pervading certain objects is recognized, and fetishes and amulets are eagerly sought. Witchcraft is often suspected, and three or four people in the community are believed to possess magical powers.

Clearly, Hinduism as it is practised in the village is not the Hinduism of the classical philosophical systems of India, for it possesses neither the metaphysical heights nor the abstract content of the latter. It is a religion of fasts, feasts and festivals, in which prescribed rituals cover all the major crises of life. Worship and propitiation of gods and spirits follow the annual round of festivals and the ritual of the human life-cycle. Disease and difficulty may also necessitate invoking assistance from these sources.

In early childhood religious instruction through legendary tales and anecdotes exercises its influence on the developing mind of the child in whose thoughts and world of fancy these ideas linger on. Youth brings in its wake a more worldly and materialistic outlook towards life and its pleasures. Thoughts are turned to religion when the evening of life approaches, partly to postpone the final moment of departure as long as it could be, and partly to ensure the future lying beyond the point of death. Analysis of life-histories reveals that spiritualism cannot be said to be the keynote in the life of the community; far from it the religion appears to be a practical one. It strengthens and fortifies the individual and the group in situations where technical competence and practical intelligence are of no avail, and at the same time acts as a bond of cohesion for maintaining the structural unity of the society.

2. BELIEF: GODS AND DEITIES

The Muslims believe in one God, and follow the way of life laid down for them by their Prophet. They all belong to the Sunni division, and as such differ from the Shias and other splinter divisions of Islam in respect of the interpretation of their holy book as well as in several details of belief, ritual and ceremonial. Almost all the Muslims of Shamirpet have been converted to Islam from Hinduism in the course of the last four or five generations.

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techniques are employed: *mantram* (chants and spells), *yantram* (use of secret formulae and designs) and *chetla kriya* (counter black magic). Amateur practitioners succeed in some cases, but all difficult cases require the intervention of an established specialist. The techniques of these specialists are their closely guarded secrets.

In Shamirpet eleven people claim some knowledge of these techniques; although only three were recognized as having 'real and effective powers'. One person who claimed to be an expert in *chetla kriya*—powerful enough to use black magic as well as to counteract it—died, when this research was in progress.

Fourteen women had some suspicion of witchcraft against them, only two being regarded as established witches. A census of ghosts was difficult, but we listed more than forty of them. Four ghosts were particularly feared. The hillock to the north-west of the village was believed to be the abode of innumerable ghosts, but now it is inhabited by the ghost of a Reddi woman who died in pregnancy. She is known to have attacked several women and children. A Madiga woman who committed suicide by jumping in the well of their settlement also became a ghost. At first she went out of the village and troubled her daughter, but on being 'driven away' from there she is believed to have come back to Shamirpet. The dread of the village, however, is the ghost of a Reddi agriculturist who dwells in the eastern side of the village. Even tough young people are afraid to go 'to his place' at mid-day, dusk or late at night. A young Muslim who died without sex experience is alleged to have interfered with many young women. No effective checks have been improvised so far to keep these ghosts under control. Many others 'have been tamed'. They were the ghosts of persons from the following categories:

(*a*) Persons too much attached to sex, wealth and children.
(*b*) Persons dying without satisfying their sexual cravings.
(*c*) Pregnant women.
(*d*) Persons meeting an accidental death, by falling from a tree, drowning or by lightning.
(*e*) Persons committing suicide.
(*f*) Persons dying with an intense hatred for someone.
(*g*) Persons who have been murdered.

Serious difficulties created by supernatural agencies call for some of the measures enumerated above. For getting over minor